United Nations A/55/633-S/2000/1106

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
20 November 2000

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 46
The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Security Council
Fifty-fifth year

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General*

I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/189 A of 17 December 1999, in which the Assembly requested me to report to it at its fifty-fifth session on the progress made in the implementation of that resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly also requested me to report every three months during its fifty-fourth session on the progress of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA). Three progress reports have been submitted: the first on 10 March 2000 (A/54/791-S/2000/205), the second on 16 June 2000 (A/54/918-S/2000/581) and the third on 18 September 2000 (A/55/393-S/2000/875).

2. The present report, which covers developments since the issuance of the last annual report on 16 November 1999 (A/54/536-S/1999/1145), is also submitted in response to requests by the Security Council for regular information on the main developments in Afghanistan. The report describes the principal events that have taken place in Afghanistan, including the major military and political developments, as well as the activities of my Personal Representative, Francesc Vendrell, who is also Head of UNSMA.

II. Peacemaking efforts and activities of the special mission

A. Peacemaking efforts

3. During my visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran in mid-June 2000, in connection with Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the Iranian leadership noted with appreciation the opening in Tehran of an UNSMA liaison office as well as the participation of my Personal Representative in the talks with the warring factions sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which were held at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in March and May 2000.

4. At the Millennium Summit at the beginning of September, I discussed the situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing peacemaking efforts by UNSMA with a large number of Heads of State and Foreign Ministers, including the Presidents of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Russian Federation, as well as

* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/248, sect. C, para. 1, the present report is being submitted on 20 November so as to take into account the most recent developments concerning Afghanistan.

00-75494 (E) 271100

the Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

5. During the Ninth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which took place in Doha, Qatar, on 12 and 13 November 2000, I participated in several discussions on the issue of Afghanistan, in particular with the Heads of State of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. My Personal Representative also attended the Ninth Summit and took part in several of my meetings in Doha.

6. Immediately following his appointment on 1 February 2000, my Personal Representative embarked on his first visit to Afghanistan, as well as to the countries which are members of the "six plus two" group on Afghanistan. In the initial stage, Mr. Vendrell focused on familiarizing himself with the situation in and around Afghanistan and on listening to the views of the Afghan parties as well as of the Governments of the "six plus two" group and other concerned and interested Governments. At a subsequent stage, while developing and strengthening his contacts, he began to evolve, in coordination with his interlocutors, some idea as to how a peace process, under the auspices of the United Nations, might be structured.

7. In Kabul and Kandahar, which my Personal Representative has visited on several occasions, his main interlocutor has been the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Taliban, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil. In addition, on 5 September, Mr. Vendrell met with the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, and on other occasions with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, the Governor of Kandahar Province, Mullah Hassan Rahmani, the Taliban Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mullah Abdul Jalil, and, more recently, with the Minister of Education, Amir Khan Muttaqi, who has been appointed the Taliban's chief negotiator. In Faizabad, Dushanbe, Tashkent and New York, Mr. Vendrell has had frequent meetings with leaders of the United Front, including the President of the Islamic State, Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. A. Abdullah, and Commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. My Personal Representative and his staff have also maintained regular contacts with other anti-Taliban commanders, including General Abdul Rashid Dostum, leader of the Jumbesh-e Melli-ye Islami-ye Afghanistan, Mohammad Ismail Khan, the former Governor of Herat who escaped from a Kandahar prison in late March, and Professor Karim Khalili, leader of the Shiite Hazara faction Hezb-e Wahdat.

8. Topics covered in my Personal Representative's talks have included the repeated demands by the Security Council in its various resolutions and statements for an immediate ceasefire; the non-targeting of the civilian population in the course of the fighting; other humanitarian and human rights matters; issues of terrorism and poppy cultivation; and the views of his interlocutors on the establishment of a broadly based, multi-ethnic and representative government. The discussions have also touched on relations with third countries. In this connection, each side has vehemently complained about persistent outside interference in support of the other side.

9. In discussing these issues, both sides have expressed their willingness to consider a negotiated solution to the conflict, although, as an alternative, the Taliban authorities have also cited the political surrender of or a military victory over their opponents. Both sides have expressed their opposition to terrorism, with the Taliban frequently stressing that the territory of Afghanistan would not be used to carry out attacks against other nations.

10. Regarding the demand of the Security Council, contained in resolution 1267 (1999) of 15 October 1999, that the Taliban turn over Osama bin Laden without delay, the Taliban reiterated its position that Mr. bin Laden took up residence when Afghanistan was under the control of the previous regime and that there was not sufficient evidence linking him to specific terrorist acts. The Taliban authorities have made it clear that they consider Mr. bin Laden as their guest and that the customs of Pashtoon hospitality do not allow for his expulsion from the country. The Taliban claim that Mr. bin Laden has no means to carry out such activities outside Afghan territory. As an alternative to his voluntary departure, an option which the Taliban authorities have at times said they would foster, the Taliban again proposed that he be tried in Afghanistan by a court composed of ulemas drawn from Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and a third Islamic country.

11. On the issue of a ceasefire, my Personal Representative has formed the impression that, despite their stated willingness to consider such a move, neither side has in reality ruled out future military activities; that any ceasefire arrived at would risk being

short-lived, particularly in the absence of verification; and that it could easily degenerate into a trade of accusations about violations to the detriment of mutual confidence and serious negotiations.

12. Most recently, my Personal Representative has concentrated his efforts on securing an agreement by the two warring parties to initiate a process of dialogue. On 30 October 2000, in separate letters addressed to my Personal Representative, both the Taliban and the United Front agreed to enter into a process of dialogue under my good offices aimed at bringing about, in the shortest possible time, an end to the armed conflict in Afghanistan through political means (see A/55/548-S/2000/1077, annexes I and II). They have also agreed that this process should be conducted either through direct meetings between the two sides, either with my active participation or that of my Personal Representative, or indirectly through my intermediation or that of my Personal Representative. Notable in the agreement is the commitment of the two sides to participate in the dialogue with serious intent and in good faith; and not to abandon the process unilaterally, but rather to pursue it without interruption until the negotiating agenda, to be agreed by the two sides, is exhausted.

13. Following this agreement, my Personal Representative has begun to shuttle between the two sides to discuss elements for the negotiating agenda. In the event that he considers that there is sufficient basis for an eventual agreement, he would schedule a meeting of the two sides, possibly before the end of 2000. In the meantime, the Taliban authorities have appointed the Minister of Education, Amir Khan Muttaqi, as head of their negotiating team, while the United Front has indicated that Acting Foreign Minister Abdullah will conduct the negotiations on their side.

14. My Personal Representative has met on two separate occasions this year, in June and October, with the former King of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, and members of his entourage to exchange views on the situation in Afghanistan and to discuss the former King's ideas on how a *loya jirga*, a traditional grand assembly, could be convened inside Afghanistan. He has also held a series of meetings in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Germany with independent Afghan personalities, including many who support the ex-King's proposal for the convening of an emergency *loya jirga*. I wish to take this opportunity to stress that clearly the criterion for participation in the shaping of Afghanistan's future cannot be the holding of weapons, but that non-fighting Afghans, both inside and outside the country, have much to contribute and need to be involved in deciding the ultimate destiny of their country.

15. In the contacts that my Personal Representative has had with members of the "six plus two" group and other concerned Governments, they have expressed their frustration with the continued war in Afghanistan and the absence of a political settlement. They view international terrorism, illicit drug production/trafficking and extremism emanating from Afghanistan as a serious threat to regional stability. Many have strongly criticized the Taliban for its apparent determination to press a military solution, which, those Governments asserted, was an unachievable and unacceptable option. Others consider a Taliban victory inevitable and are consequently of the opinion that the international community should start engaging the Taliban in the expectation that this might lead to changes in the Taliban's policies and behaviour. All have nonetheless acknowledged the central role of the United Nations in the resolution of the Afghan issue and have reiterated their full support both for my efforts and for those of my Personal Representative.

16. Mr. Vendrell has maintained close contact with the Governments of Afghanistan's neighbours, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and has held several meetings, on which I have already reported, with their leaders. Most recently, Mr. Vendrell met with the Foreign Ministers of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as with the Special Presidential Envoy of Turkmenistan on Afghanistan and with senior officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, including the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. During his latest visit to Tehran on 8 and 9 October, Mr. Vendrell discussed the issue of Afghanistan at length with the Chief of the Afghan Headquarters, Ibrahim Taherian, as well as with the Deputy Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Mohsen Aminzadeh and Javad Zarif.

17. The focus of my Personal Representative's discussions has been the implications for regional and international security of the situation in Afghanistan, the prospects for peace, the means of achieving a lasting settlement, the question of human rights,

terrorism and drug production/trafficking. All his interlocutors pledged their cooperation in assisting the United Nations to establish a peace process between the Afghan parties. On 3 November, my Personal Representative and the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan briefed the Security Council on their activities.

B. Activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, including the Civil Affairs Unit

18. During the reporting period, UNSMA strengthened its political presence in the region with the opening of a liaison office in Tehran and the reopening of a political office in Kabul. The Civil Affairs Unit has become operational, with offices in six locations in Afghanistan. UNSMA's military component has been reinvigorated and it is my intention to restore it to its previous strength of four, with the Senior Military Adviser stationed in Islamabad, one adviser based in Afghanistan, one in Tajikistan, covering the north of Afghanistan, and the fourth rotating as required.

Civil Affairs Unit

19. The primary objective of the Civil Affairs Unit of UNSMA, as defined in Security Council resolution 1214 (1998), is to monitor the situation, promote and support respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deter massive and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In order to achieve this objective, the Unit, which functions like civil affairs components of other United Nations operations, combines elements of information-gathering with human rights observation through its presence inside Afghanistan. In doing so, the Unit also assists the Personal Representative in carrying out the good offices of the Secretary-General by promoting a better understanding and knowledge of the needs and demands of the Afghan people and providing vital information that will help him develop an agenda more responsive to those needs and demands. It is only through the building of contacts and greater familiarity with the needs of the people that the United Nations can become more effective in pursuing its peacemaking activities. This year, the first full year of the Unit's existence, has clearly been one of an exploratory nature, laying the foundations for deeper involvement with the Afghan people.

20. With the recent opening of an office in Mazar-e-Sharif, the Unit's nationwide deployment is complete in the six major urban centres, Faizabad, Herat, Jalalabad, Kabul and Kandahar. The Unit would also like to open an office in Bamyan in order to observe the situation on the ground in the central highlands more closely. Missions have meanwhile been deployed to the Hazarajat and Ghor regions in the central highlands. The Unit is currently composed of a Coordinator and seven Civil Affairs Officers; the recruitment of four more officers is expected to be completed by the end of 2000. By early 2001, UNSMA should achieve its aim of stationing two Civil Affairs Officers in each of its main duty stations in Afghanistan.

21. Working inside the country, the Civil Affairs Officers are attempting to build up and strengthen an ongoing persuasive dialogue with Afghan authorities at both the regional and local levels in areas such as administration, the law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the media, with a view to fostering human rights awareness among these key groups.

22. In engaging Afghan civil society, Civil Affairs Officers have pursued contacts with women's groups, youth organizations, private and non-governmental organization (NGO)-run media, religious leaders, intellectuals and *shuras* (traditional assemblies of local notables). They have monitored and reported on political, social, economic and cultural trends, including highlights on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, and are also studying areas such as administration, judiciary, legislature, constitution, media and economic activities in order to better map the current and future situation of Afghanistan and to respond to the needs of Afghans. A significant decline in the already largely insufficient financial and human resources allocated to the civil sector has been recorded nationwide.

III. Recent developments in Afghanistan

A. Military situation

23. This year the fighting season started earlier than usual. The Taliban, with their superiority in number

and logistics, took the initiative from the outset. The intensity of this year's fighting indicates that the flow of arms and other war-making materiel into Afghanistan continued unabated and, during the last few months, even rose to new levels. Reports suggest that the presence of non-Afghan fighters, mainly from Pakistan, is significant. The season's full-scale fighting started in the north of Kabul with two vigorous offensives by the Taliban forces on 1 and 9 July. Detailed descriptions of the fighting during the spring and summer periods were given in my previous reports to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

24. In September and early October the victorious Taliban forces secured wider areas around Taloqan and embarked upon a series of attacks to the north, capturing the districts of Khwajaghar, Dashti Archi and Emam Saheb in Takhar Province. At this point, Badakhshan Province was the sole province left entirely under control of the United Front.

25. On 14 October, the United Front launched a successful counterattack at a moment when the Taliban forces were rotating units and releasing the veterans from seven weeks of sustained fighting, replacing them with fresh units. The districts of Emam Saheb, Dashti Archi and Emam Saheb were rapidly recaptured and the United Front forces advanced towards Taloqan from the east and north. After 10 days of progress, the United Front counter-offensive ebbed and the Taliban was able to push the attacking forces back. As of 5 November, the confrontation lines were more or less the same as at 13 October, and the situation appeared to have developed into a stalemate.

26. The Taliban campaign in Baghlan/Takhar engaged around 13,000 to 15,000 Taliban fighters after reinforcement, while less than half that figure fought on the side of the United Front. The fight for Taloqan in particular was tense. Both sides sustained heavy losses in terms of people killed, wounded or captured, estimated in total at 6,000 to 9,000; 65 per cent of those casualties can be attributed to the Taliban forces.

27. This year's military setback put the United Front under intense pressure. A series of meetings were hurriedly convened with the evident purpose of saving the alliance from disintegrating and inviting non-United Front commanders to join the fight against the Taliban. Apart from a reported meeting between the two Uzbek commanders, Generals Dostum and Abdul Malik, in the eastern Iranian city of Masshad earlier in the year, two potentially significant encounters among key anti-Taliban commanders Massoud, Dostum and Ismail Khan took place in the Islamic Republic of Iran, in October and November, as a response to the perception of increased foreign support to the Taliban. It was agreed at their first meeting that the United Front would establish a new military council, to include themselves and other key commanders.

28. Winning over the loyalty of opponents and switching sides has been part of the civil war in Afghanistan. On 25 July, the Taliban arrested Mohammad Bashir Baghlani, the Governor of Baghlan Province and one of the Taliban's key allies in northern Afghanistan, on charges that he had established secret contacts with the opposition. The arrest triggered clashes between the Taliban and the United Front. Shortly afterwards, Abdullah Jan Wahidi, the former Governor of Laghman Province, who had announced his alliance with the Taliban in a publicized ceremony in late April, defected back to the United Front. In late August, it was reported that differences had developed between the Governor of the central province of Bamyan, Maulawi Islam, and the Taliban. There have been reports since mid-July of infighting among the United Front leadership in areas adjacent to Faizabad, the provincial capital of Badakhshan.

B. Political situation

Regional issues

29. The conflict in Afghanistan is having an increasing impact on the situation in Central and South Asia. Afghanistan's neighbours and countries farther afield are worried about spill-over effects from the ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the United Front.

30. The President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton, visited India and Pakistan in March. During his visit to Islamabad, Mr. Clinton discussed the question of terrorism and the continued presence in Afghanistan of Osama bin Laden with Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf. These issues as well as those related to peace and human rights in Afghanistan have been the object of further discussions between Pakistan and the United States, including those held during the visit to Islamabad, in late May, of Thomas Pickering, Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and the visits by Karl Inderfurth, Assistant

Secretary of State, and Michael Sheehan, Head of the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the State Department, on several occasions in 2000.

31. In September, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, dispatched a Special Envoy, Sergei Yastrebzhemsky, to Islamabad for discussions on Afghanistan with senior Pakistani officials, including Chief Executive Musharraf and General Mahmud Ahmad, Director-General of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). During his visit to India in October, President Putin agreed with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to coordinate efforts to counter terrorism in the region, in particular that emanating from Afghanistan. An Indian and Russian working group has already been formed in this regard.

32. The United States and the Russian Federation held two rounds of high-level talks, in Washington, D.C., in August and in Moscow in October, to exchange views on the situation in Afghanistan. It has been reported that after the second round in Moscow, the two countries agreed to put international pressure on the Taliban. The Taliban authorities rejected the claim that they posed a threat to stability in the Central Asian region.

33. The Central Asian States remain on high alert with regard to the situation in Afghanistan. In mid-April, the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan met at Tashkent and signed an agreement on joint action to fight terrorism as well as political, religious and other kinds of extremism and international organized crime, of which Afghanistan was perceived to be the source. The Russian Federation expressed its increasing concern about the Taliban's alleged support for the Chechen rebels inside and outside Afghanistan. All these concerns have been strongly rejected by the Taliban.

34. In October 2000, a summit meeting was held in Bishkek by States (with the exception of Uzbekistan) parties to accords signed on 24 May 2000 in Minsk, reinvigorating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) collective security treaty to counter terrorism and extremism. The purpose of the summit meeting, in which the Presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan participated, was to discuss a long-term mutual security plan. In a statement issued on 11 October, the group urged the Security Council to convene a special session to deal with the civil war in Afghanistan. The Presidents also called for an Islamic conference to be convened jointly by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to coordinate efforts to end the Afghan conflict.

35. The "Shanghai five" group (now the "Shanghai forum" group), comprising China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan, at its summit meeting in Dushanbe on 5 July, called for an end to the Afghan conflict, expressed concern over tensions in Afghanistan and discussed means of countering terrorism originating from that country. The Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan convened an emergency summit meeting in Bishkek on 20 August to address security issues in the aftermath of an infiltration earlier in the month by armed Uzbek groups into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which they believed had originated in Afghanistan.

36. In mid-May, Taliban Interior Minister Mullah Abdur Razzaq paid an official visit to Islamabad to hold discussions with Pakistani authorities on the extradition of criminals, terrorism, drug trafficking and the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement. At that time Pakistan handed over a list of 18 camps inside Afghanistan where Pakistani militants allegedly receive military training and demanded the closure of those camps and the extradition of those suspected of terrorist activities in Pakistan. Taliban authorities have reportedly sought over 100 million dollars worth of assistance from Pakistan for rehabilitation projects.

37. In a development that added another source of regional concern related to Afghanistan, it was reported that in early May Jumaboi Namangani, an Uzbek dissident, had crossed with his armed followers from Tajikistan into Taliban-held territory in northern Afghanistan. An official Taliban radio broadcast called the allegation baseless since such an act would contravene their foreign policy principles. There have also been persistent reports of the involvement of a substantial number of Arabs, Chechens, Pakistanis, Uighurs and other outsiders fighting alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban have similarly denied these allegations.

38. To my grave concern, this year has seen the continued targeting and killing of Afghan leaders for political reasons. The Taliban-appointed Governor of Kunduz Province, Aref Khan, as well as other Afghans were slain in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. In none of

these cases has a suspect been identified or apprehended by Pakistani law enforcement forces.

Contacts between individual States and Afghan parties

39. Since the beginning of 2000, numerous Iranian technical delegations have visited Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan with the stated purpose of inspecting and assessing the damage suffered by their diplomatic facilities in the cities of Herat and Kabul. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran has yet to receive what it considers a satisfactory reply from the Taliban to its demand for the apprehension and extradition or punishment of those responsible for the killing of Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998, the border post between Islam Qaleh and Do Ghalun, reopened in the autumn of 1999, has remained open for trade throughout 2000 and the Iranian Consulate in Herat has reopened.

40. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Ugo Intini, visited the two warring sides in late September in an attempt to create a "humanitarian corridor" between the war-divided territories of Afghanistan. Mr. Intini had discussed the initiative with Taliban Foreign Minister Mutawakkil and United Front Commander Massoud, in Kabul and Dushanbe, respectively.

41. Recent weeks have seen the initiation of contacts between Uzbekistan and the Taliban through their ambassadors in Islamabad. At their second meeting, on 15 October, a letter was delivered from Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, addressed to President Karimov, assuring non-interference in the internal affairs of Uzbekistan. A third meeting took place on 18 October, at which agreement was reportedly reached on stepping up the level of diplomatic contact to that of deputy foreign minister. Following a meeting on 7 November between the Chief Executive of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, and the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Kasymzhomart Tokayev, the latter stated that in the future the Taliban would most likely have a dominating role in a coalition government in Afghanistan.

42. On 9 October, a private airline company, Flying Dolphin, based in the United Arab Emirates, inaugurated a weekly flight between the cities Sharjah and Kandahar. This is the first commercial airline to operate in and out of Afghanistan since the sanctions provisioned in resolution 1267 (1999) went into effect on 14 November 1999.

C. Initiatives taken by Afghans and Member States

Rome process

43. As decided at a meeting in Rome in November 1999, supporters of the *loya jirga* initiative, led by former King Zahir Shah, the so-called "Rome process", dispatched delegations to United Nations Headquarters, Washington, D.C., Paris, Berlin, London, Islamabad and Kandahar to explain their activities and to seek support. My Personal Representative met in Islamabad with two separate delegations visiting Pakistan and the Taliban in the context of the proposal to convene an emergency *loya jirga*. The former King also intends to dispatch delegations to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Central Asian republics, the Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia, as well as to the United Front.

Other processes and efforts

44. A representative of a parallel initiative known as the "Cyprus process" visited New York to explain its activities. On 15 September, this group convened its fourth meeting in Cyprus, at which the mechanism to convene a grand national assembly inside Afghanistan was discussed. Over 70 Afghan intellectuals participated in the two-day conference, to which the United Nations and a number of Member States sent observers. While invitations were extended to both the Taliban and the United Front, neither sent a representative to the gathering. From 4 to 6 October, the Council for Peace and National Unity of Afghanistan, a group which has links with the Rome process, convened in Bonn, with the assistance of the German Government, to discuss practical ways to accelerate the convening of an emergency *loya jirga*, in accordance with the peace initiative of the ex-King Zahir Shah.

Initiative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

45. As mentioned in my previous reports, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mohammed Khatami, in his capacity as Chairman of OIC, launched a diplomatic initiative in February 2000. OIC invited the United Front and the Taliban to Jeddah, Saudi

Arabia, for two rounds of separate talks with the OIC mission, from 7 to 9 March and again from 8 to 10 May, with a view to convening eventual face-to-face negotiations between the two sides. My Personal Representative attended these meetings on behalf of the United Nations as an observer. Prior to the first meeting I met personally with the members of an OIC delegation when they visited New York on 1 March to explain the initiative.

46. The OIC talks concluded with an agreement for a comprehensive exchange of prisoners of war between the two sides, to be conducted through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). To my regret, the process for the prisoner exchange was interrupted by the fighting that broke out early in July. Nevertheless, the two sides have continued with an informal exchange of smaller groups of prisoners.

Initiative by Turkmenistan

47. In late August, the Special Envoy for Afghanistan of the President of Turkmenistan, Boris Shikhmuradov, who had earlier visited the Islamic Republic of Iran, paid a visit to Kandahar to meet Mullah Omar and subsequently travelled to Islamabad where he was received by General Musharraf. Later, Mr. Shikhmuradov proceeded to Dushanbe to hold talks with Ahmad Shah Massoud. During his discussions with the two belligerents, the Turkmen envoy suggested that the two sides agree to a long-term ceasefire, proposing Massoud be given authority to run the north-eastern sector of the country in return for accepting the overall authority of the "Islamic Emirate" in Afghanistan. It would appear that both the Taliban and the United Front declined the suggestion.

D. Activities of the "six plus two" group and the Group of Twenty-One

48. My Personal Representative held a meeting of the "six plus two" group in Islamabad on 22 May. On 30 May, he convened another meeting in Islamabad of the Group of Twenty-One, a larger group of Governments with influence in Afghanistan, which had not met since June 1998. The Group of Twenty-One comprises China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Uzbekistan, as well as OIC.

49. In the light of the intensifying fighting and the worsening humanitarian situation, I decided to convene a meeting of the "six plus two" group on 15 September at the level of foreign ministers. The meeting, the second of its kind following the first ministerial meeting in September 1998, ended with the adoption of a statement (A/55/393-S/2000/875, annex), requesting my Personal Representative to enter into contact with all relevant Afghan parties and to report back to the group on the outcome of his contacts.

50. As agreed at the 15 September meeting, the "six plus two" group held another meeting, this time at the level of deputy foreign ministers, on 3 November, in order to receive a report from my Personal Representative on his contacts with all relevant Afghan parties regarding their willingness to agree to a ceasefire and enter into negotiations to bring about a political solution in Afghanistan. In its concluding statement (see annex), the group welcomed the written agreement communicated by the two warring parties in letters to my Personal Representative to enter into a process of dialogue, without preconditions and through the intermediation of the Secretary-General or his Personal Representative, aimed at achieving a political solution to the conflict. The group in particular noted the commitment of the two sides to negotiate in good faith and not to unilaterally abandon the negotiating process until the agenda, to be agreed by the two sides, has been exhausted. It requested my Personal Representative to report to the group by 1 February 2001 on the progress achieved in the process of dialogue by the two warring factions.

51. Based on the particular interest of the "six plus two" group, a meeting was convened on 28 February in New York in order to discuss the issue of illicit drugs emanating from Afghanistan. The meeting, which was also attended by senior counter-narcotics experts from the capitals of the "six plus two" group members, was co-chaired by Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. The subsequent activities of the group in this regard will be described in the humanitarian section of the present report.

IV. Humanitarian activities and human rights

52. The conditions under which assistance is provided in Afghanistan have become progressively more complicated as the year has progressed. The principles of assistance programming, as defined by the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, have been regularly challenged by actions taken by the Taliban authorities. Throughout, the assistance community has maintained its commitment to the people of Afghanistan through the provision of assistance while at the same time continuing dialogue with the Taliban authorities. However, issues of principle remain, such as the restriction on the employment of Afghan women by the United Nations and NGOs outside the health sector, as well as the contents of a statute issued by the Taliban authorities which lays out regulations governing the activities of United Nations agencies and programmes. Both constitute major setbacks in the process of constructive engagement with the Taliban. The United Nations has made it clear to the authorities that discrimination on the basis of gender is unacceptable. The United Nations humanitarian community, under the leadership of the Coordinator's office, and with the assistance of Member States through the Afghanistan Support Group, continues to seek acceptable resolution of these issues.

53. The provision of assistance to Afghans by the United Nations and by international and national NGOs has, for the second year, followed a principled approach consistent with the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan. The assistance community attempts to make best use of all available resources through a principled common programme. The programme, presented in the Consolidated Appeal for 2000, addresses the priority needs to: (a) alleviate human suffering; (b) protect and advance human rights; (c) provide minimum basic social services; (d) build sustainable livelihoods by empowering Afghans; and (e) support the return of refugees. To date, the international community has provided approximately $150 million, of which $140 million was in direct response to the needs presented within the framework of the Consolidated Appeal, representing 48 per cent of the total requested.

54. In some parts of the country, implementation of assistance programmes has been hampered by restrictions on access to those in need of humanitarian assistance and constrained by high levels of insecurity. Although the United Nations was able to negotiate a cross-line operation to provide for some 60,000 conflict-related displaced in the Panjshir Valley in early December 1999, no further agreements were obtained from the authorities for the continuation of such operations during 2000. Similar difficulties were experienced in obtaining access to the communities in northern Hazarajat affected by conflict, drought and economic blockade during the second quarter of the year, although the authorities did allow for some assistance to reach those in Samangan and Dar-e-souf during August. The United Nations Coordinator's office continues to advocate that the authorities give greater respect to the right of civilians to humanitarian assistance.

55. Security conditions away from the frontlines and zones of conflict have been adequate for the implementation of humanitarian programmes, although volatility remains. However, the tragic murder in August of seven Afghan workers of the United Nations-supported mine awareness programme by an unidentified armed band in western Afghanistan confirmed the everyday risks faced by humanitarian personnel.

56. Socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan have deteriorated significantly. A combination of the war economy, the effects of drought and restrictions on transit trade with Pakistan are compounding the vulnerability of the majority of Afghans. The prolonged conflict and the resultant anarchy has left hundreds of thousands of Afghans chronically dependent on international assistance for their survival. The provision of food, shelter, health care and other services by the assistance community is recognized as an essential lifeline for many.

57. Those displaced by fighting, and recently by the effects of the drought, are of particular concern to the humanitarian community; the most vulnerable are being supported by food provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). Populations displaced by fighting in 1999 remain in Kabul, the Panjshir Valley and in various locations in the north and east of the country. Ongoing fighting in the central and northern regions is adding to these numbers. Approximately 134,000 displaced persons are in a situation of acute vulnerability as a consequence of conflict. Their critical needs are being addressed by emergency

assistance programmes implemented by NGOs supported and coordinated by the United Nations.

58. As predicted in reports at the end of 1999, the combination of successive dry winters and strict border controls has exacerbated food insecurity for most Afghans. The current drought conditions are considered the worst in 40 years and have affected both crop and livestock production dramatically. The crop assessment reports of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP estimate cereal production for 2000 at 1.82 million metric tons, representing a reduction of 44 per cent relative to 1999 and 53 per cent relative to 1998. Reduced fodder availability, water shortages and distress sales have decreased animal holdings by 50 to 100 per cent across the country. FAO estimates that 300,000 metric tons of wheat seed is planted annually in Afghanistan. This year there is an estimated minimum deficit of 60,000 metric tons of seed as a result of either widespread production failure, forced consumption for food or poorly formed grains that will not germinate.

59. In June, the United Nations and its partners presented a funding request to implement a strategy to address the additional needs caused by the drought. The strategy focused on providing assistance in situ to the most vulnerable populations in order to stabilize communities and avoid migration. The success of the strategy has been contingent on access and the extent to which additional resources have been made available by donors. In September, a large number of families from the severely drought-affected and remote districts of Ghor, Badghis and Faryab provinces began to arrive in Herat, the main urban centre in the west. Currently, some 40,000 people displaced by drought are in Herat. The assistance community is mobilizing all available resources to cater for their shelter, food, water and sanitation needs. There is disturbing evidence that more people are leaving their homes in a desperate attempt to survive the effects of the drought. While food has been made available, the lack of cash for non-food items and support for food assistance programmes are hampering the response effort. The international donor community is urged to respond generously to the requests of the United Nations and its partners to limit the extent of this crisis.

60. In addition to the emergency food aid provided in response to need caused by drought, WFP has allotted a total of 115,800 tons of food commodities for around 1.5 million food-insecure people. WFP assistance focused on the urban poor living in Kabul, Jalalabad and Mazar. Around 485,000 people, mostly from female-headed households and the disabled, are regularly provided with highly subsidized breads.

61. Early this year, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) successfully negotiated an agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran for the repatriation of Afghan refugees. Since the implementation of the joint programme in April, forcible return of Afghan refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran has decreased drastically to several thousands (from 70,000 in 1999) and contributed significantly to increased protection of Afghan refugees who are unable or unwilling to return. On the other hand, the number of Afghan refugees who returned voluntarily from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran has doubled compared to 1999. Between January and the end of September 2000, a total of 170,000 Afghan refugees returned voluntarily with the assistance of UNHCR, WFP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (70,000 from Pakistan, 100,000 from the Islamic Republic of Iran). Repatriation to drought-affected areas and zones of conflict has not been encouraged.

62. Initial reintegration assistance has been provided on a continual basis throughout 2000. This has included the provision of transport, individual household support, potable water and emergency shelter construction, in addition to programmes of education, health and income generation. This support has specifically targeted women and other vulnerable segments of the returnee population.

63. The United Nations specialized agencies, along with NGO partners, have conducted priority health activities throughout 2000. These include human resource development, integrated disease control activities and safe motherhood and water and sanitation programmes. Unprecedented outbreaks of meningitis and falciparum malaria related to climatic changes were seen in the central highlands, while hemorraghic fever reported in the west was likely associated with animal flocks displaced due to the drought. Responding to these outbreaks from contingency supplies with simultaneous negligible donations of emergency medical aid has meant that the current response capacity cannot cope with the threat of expanding populations of internally displace persons in the west, due to the drought, and in the north due to the conflict.

64. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), WHO and a wide range of NGOs supported the national immunization days during May and June and October and November 2000. During the spring round about 5.3 million children under 5 were vaccinated against polio, the highest coverage since 1994. WHO has also carried out malaria and tuberculosis control programmes.

65. The Poverty Eradication and Community Empowerment Programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assumes a direct and an indirect correlation between peace-building and conflict prevention on the one hand and community empowerment and poverty eradication on the other. Operating in both rural and urban environments, in line with traditional Afghan social structures, the programme has successfully established and strengthened over 2,000 multiethnic community-based organizations and interest groups that have formed sustainable linkages in terms of reconciliation, peace-building, good governance and refugee reintegration. Implementing projects through the United Nations Office for Project Services, FAO and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the programme has contributed substantially to the aid community's collective efforts in the field of food security, access to basic social services and to livelihood opportunities.

66. Afghanistan continues to rank as one of the most severely landmine-contaminated countries in the world. Currently, 720 square kilometres of land are known to contain landmines. Out of this, 340 square kilometres are considered as high priority mined areas, which have a direct adverse impact on the lives of the Afghan population, while the remaining 380 square kilometres are in low priority areas. Assessment of the landmine and unexploded ordnance threat is continuous and ongoing.

67. Since its inception in 1989 and as at October, the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan has been able to clear 518 square kilometres of mined and battlefield areas contaminated by unexploded ordnance. Of the total areas cleared, 79 square kilometres were cleared in 2000 alone. There have also been significant inroads in the survey of mine and battlefield areas; over 619 square kilometres have been covered. Mine awareness training and materials have been provided to over 6.8 million Afghans.

68. Funding for mine action peaked in 1998, allowing for continued programme growth, but decreased substantially in 1999 and 2000. The severe shortfall of $3.5 million for the activities of the Mine Action Programme for the period from September through December 2000 forced the programme to suspend its staff on two months' leave without pay and to freeze staff salaries and increments. As a further consequence, only 64 per cent of the sites targeted for clearance will be cleared in 2000.

Narcotics

69. Afghanistan remains the world's largest supplier of opium. While the area under opium poppy cultivation had doubled in the 1998/99 season as compared to the previous year, this year's survey shows a slight decline of 10 per cent from 91,000 hectares in 1999 to around 82,000 hectares this year. This figure, however, does not live up to the Taliban decree of September 1999 to reduce opium poppy cultivation by one third in the 1999/00 planting season.

70. This year's harvest, on the other hand, has fallen by 28 per cent from a record of 4,581 tons of opium in 1999 to 3,275 tons this year, mainly due to the severe drought. The cultivation of opium poppy is concentrated in fairly distinct areas of Afghanistan, with 92 per cent of opium poppy cultivation in only six of Afghanistan's 30 provinces. An alternative development pilot programme of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention has focused on three target areas and has reduced the opium harvest this year by 50 per cent in Ghorak, Khakrez and Maiwand districts. This has demonstrated that alternative development is the right strategy for illicit crop reduction in the Afghan context. Lack of funds for the alternative development pilot programme may lead to a lack of credibility in the future and jeopardize the sustainability of the poppy reduction achieved in the target districts in 2000.

71. Meanwhile, on 28 July 2000, the Taliban supreme leader, Mullah Omar, issued a total ban on opium poppy cultivation in the forthcoming planting season. The Taliban authorities have declared that Afghanistan's drug problems could only be solved if the international community assisted in the implementation of the decree.

72. Given the continuing war in Afghanistan, it is recognized that institutional support for law

enforcement within the country is not practicable. However, since the increasing drug trafficking from Afghanistan poses a serious global threat, the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention has initiated a drug law enforcement programme in the countries around Afghanistan, a "security belt", aimed at containing at the regional level a problem having its source in Afghanistan. This is being achieved through the promotion of coordinated drug control efforts by China, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which surround Afghanistan along a 5,000 kilometre border.

73. The commitment of the "six plus two" group to address the illicit drug problem in Afghanistan and its implications for the region and beyond was also demonstrated at the "six plus two" high-level meeting in New York on 28 February 2000. The President of the Security Council subsequently encouraged the "six plus two" group to address drug-related issues in a coordinated manner, with the support of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. It also urged other Member States to help strengthen the drug control capacities of countries bordering Afghanistan.

74. In May, the Office, experts from the "six plus two" group and donor countries met in Vienna to endorse the formulation of a regional action plan intended to promote an exchange of information, the interdiction of cross-border drug shipments and control of chemicals used to produce drugs, as well as the elimination of illicit crops in Afghanistan and subsequent alternative development activities. The United Nations common programming approach in Afghanistan was particularly emphasized as an appropriate framework to ensure that assistance was consistent with the goal of opium poppy elimination. The regional action plan was approved by the "six plus two" group at its meeting in New York on 13 September.

Human rights

75. During this past year, Afghans have continued to suffer a wide range of deprivations, violations, policies and practices that severely restrict or deny their human rights. The war continues to be the most harmful and significant factor impinging on the rights of Afghans. The accumulated and direct effects of conflict, compounded by extreme poverty and profound underdevelopment, contribute to a situation that has resulted in Afghans being amongst those who are least able to enjoy their rights, including the right to life.

76. I have pointed to the alarming statistics and socio-economic indicators that provide some insight into the limited enjoyment of human rights by Afghans in previous reports. The drought, coupled with conflict and crippling poverty, has, without question, exacerbated an already bad situation, particularly in terms of the right to food, health and adequate shelter. The need to cut back on mine action activities due to inadequate funding is likely to further threaten the right to life of mine-affected communities.

77. Policies and practices that are widespread in Afghanistan, particularly in relation to women and girls, are a continuous cause of grave concern. As indicated in my previous reports, the situation of women and girls remained dismal, due to both the unconscionable policies of the Taliban and the general decline in socio-economic indicators. The firman issued by the Taliban authorities in July restricting the employment of Afghan women by the United Nations and NGOs, with the exception of the health sector, is a clear violation of the right to work and to an adequate standard of living. This firman constitutes an unacceptable precedent and undermines the ability of aid agencies to reach those who are most vulnerable and marginalized in Afghan society. The United Nations Human Rights Coordinator, in consultation with the aid community, is pursuing this matter with the Taliban authorities. Aid agencies continue to pursue activities specifically designed to address the problem as well as the ramifications of gender discrimination.

78. Afghans in frontline areas have been subjected repeatedly to indiscriminate bombing and the indiscriminate use of landmines. Populations from frontline communities have fled in large numbers from each battle zone, as civilians are all too aware that their rights as non-combatants are frequently violated. Gross violations of human rights include summary executions, including an alleged mass killing of detainees in Samangan in May. Civilians, including women, have been arbitrarily detained in conditions that are described as cruel and inhumane. There are numerous reports of Taliban troops deliberately destroying, burning and looting homes and assets essential for survival. The deliberate targeting and harming of civilians has a long history in the Afghan conflict and points to the urgent need to hold accountable those who are responsible for such heinous

crimes. Reports about summary executions, arbitrary detention and forced labour of those in detention camps remain of great concern.

79. It can only be regretted that the Taliban movement continues to deny access to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Kamal Hossain. His latest report (A/55/346) highlights the alarming situation regarding human rights in Afghanistan.

V. Observations and conclusions

80. This has been an exceptionally difficult year for most Afghans. The country is facing a combination of war, with its direct and accumulated effects, widespread poverty exacerbated by the worst drought in 30 years, continued gross violations of human rights, and the destruction and criminalization of the economy, with the result that most Afghans are reduced to eking out a "bare bones" existence. The situation is likely to deteriorate dramatically over the winter months and throughout next year.

81. Developments in Afghanistan throughout 2000 have given little ground for optimism. Once again, we have witnessed with dreary familiarity a major military offensive late this past summer, with all the consequent displacement and suffering of the civilian population. And once again, I must note the continued involvement on the side of each warring faction of external players of various sorts. It is deeply distressing that a significant number of non-Afghan personnel, largely from Pakistani *madrassahs*, are not only taking active part in the fighting, most, if not all, on the side of the Taliban, and there also appears to be outside involvement in the planning and logistical support of their military operations. This as well as other forms of interference by certain governments in the internal affairs of Afghanistan enable and encourage both factions to pursue their military aims.

82. The recent Taliban decree imposing, for the first time, a total ban on opium poppy cultivation in the territory under its control is an encouraging development that deserves a positive response. However, this step was offset by other actions of the Taliban such as the edict against the employment of Afghan women. It is most regrettable to note that despite some limited improvements, women and girls have continued to face serious abuses of their fundamental rights, including severe restrictions imposed on their participation in public life.

83. I deeply deplore the Taliban's failure so far to comply, one year after its adoption, with the Security Council's demand that it turn over Osama bin Laden under the terms laid down in paragraph 2 of resolution 1267 (1999). Nor has any progress been apparent in the investigation of the murders of the Iranian diplomatic and consular staff in Mazar-e-Sharif. I also regret that no visible progress has been achieved in the past year towards bringing the perpetrators of the murder of Lieutenant Colonel Calo, the military adviser of the Special Mission, to trial.

84. The United Nations country team for Afghanistan and its NGO partners continue their efforts to alleviate the problems faced by the Afghan people and to provide the needed assistance to improve the dire humanitarian situation. However, funding for the Consolidated Appeal for Afghanistan, and specifically for the drought appeal, has reached only around 50 per cent of the amount needed. The critically important mine clearance and anti-narcotics programmes have also been affected by inadequate funding. I call again upon the international community to respond generously in order to safeguard the continuation of this vital work.

85. The agreement by the Taliban and the United Front on 2 November to enter into a process of dialogue without preconditions, under United Nations auspices, in order to bring to an end the Afghan conflict by political means, provides a glimmer of hope in this otherwise grim scenario. While skepticism as to its long-term perspective may be warranted, given the past record of false beginnings and dashed hopes, the agreement does mark the first time that the two warring sides have committed themselves in writing to seek a political settlement through an uninterrupted process of negotiations under United Nations auspices from which neither side is to withdraw until all the items on the agenda, to be agreed by themselves, have been exhausted.

86. The agreement is purely procedural in nature and thus constitutes only a first step in what will be at best a long and difficult journey towards peace. For it to develop the required momentum and have a chance of success, I must count on the support of the Security Council and the General Assembly, not to mention the

authentic cooperation of the "six plus two" group. Only in this way, and through a carefully calibrated and timely mix of incentives and disincentives, will it be possible to generate and sustain the necessary political will within the two parties, help them overcome their deep mutual mistrust and motivate them to proceed with due flexibility and speed in addressing the issues that lie at the core of the Afghan conflict. One such incentive ought to be the elaboration of a plan by the international financial and development institutions, with the support of donor countries, for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Such an initiative would provide the Afghans with a ray of hope for a better future and also help ensure the durability of any peace settlement.

87. I am pleased to note that the atmosphere within the "six plus two" group has markedly improved in the course of the year, even if much remains to be done to ensure greater cohesion among its members. The regional action plan on drugs that has been adopted by the "six plus two" group is a useful step towards achieving the political cohesion among its members essential for the ultimate objective of the group — to help settle the Afghan conflict through political negotiations. My Personal Representative and I shall endeavour, in our contacts, to foster a realization that their legitimate interests in Afghanistan will best be served by simultaneously ending their support for one or the other faction and by encouraging the establishment of a unified government in Afghanistan that is a genuine reflection of the aspirations of the Afghan people. Throughout history, countries in the region enjoyed peace and prosperity only when Afghanistan was peaceful under a unified government and could play its natural role as a bridge between the countries of south, west and central Asia.

88. Any lasting settlement must also involve the participation of non-belligerent Afghans, from both inside and outside Afghanistan, for the shaping of Afghanistan's future cannot be left solely to those who brandish weapons. In this context, I greatly value the initiative by the former King, Zahir Shah, whose figure is held in high regard in Afghanistan, to convene an emergency *loya jirga* inside the country as a means of mobilizing and giving voice to important sectors of the Afghan population.

89. This year has seen a considerable strengthening of UNSMA's role and presence on the ground in Afghanistan. UNSMA, with its full complement of political officers on board, has opened a liaison office in Tehran and re-established its political presence in Kabul. Both offices are headed by senior political officers. The political work of the Special Mission is likely to increase in the months to come, particularly if, as we must hope, the current efforts being pursued by my Personal Representative evolve into substantive negotiations. At that point UNSMA would have to develop a sharply increased diplomatic capacity and it is for this purpose that I intend to strengthen the Mission's political staff.

90. While I regret the refusal of the Taliban authorities to receive the Special Rapporteur, I am gratified that the Civil Affairs Unit is now in place and functioning and has been able to count on the cooperation of both warring sides. It has quickly proved its usefulness, both in terms of building a relationship of trust with provincial and local authorities as well as other local leaders, and of apprising the Head of Mission of developments in Afghanistan, including human rights aspects. The Unit should reach its full strength by the beginning of 2001 and will be tasked to pay particular attention to strengthening its ties with Afghan civil society in the year ahead.

91. Throughout the year, UNSMA's military component has succeeded in establishing solid contacts with the military authorities of both warring factions, as well as providing reliable and informative support to the Head of Mission. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Brigadier General Jan Gunnar Isberg (Sweden), who has just left the Mission after one year's service as Senior Military Adviser, for his dedication, hard work and initiative. It is in view of the benefits brought to the Mission by the fruitful interaction between its political and military components that I intend to revert to the situation that prevailed until late last year, by increasing the number of military advisers from two to four.

92. While there has been a measure of attention paid to Afghanistan this year, the tendency persists to see Afghanistan as a series of compartmentalized problems, be they narcotics, terrorism or refugees, and to seek to solve them in isolation rather than through a comprehensive approach. It is to be hoped that the Security Council and the General Assembly will set for themselves clear and achievable objectives in Afghanistan and that their resolutions and decisions will be guided by the principle of effectiveness in

achieving those goals and taken in the context of, rather than being a substitute for, a comprehensive strategy to bring about a lasting solution to the Afghan conflict.

Annex

Statement of the "six plus two" group

3 November 2000

A high-level meeting of the "six plus two" group took place on 3 November 2000 at United Nations Headquarters, as agreed by their Foreign Ministers and other senior representatives at their high-level meeting on 15 September 2000, to receive a report from the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General on his contacts with all relevant Afghan parties regarding their willingness to agree to a ceasefire and enter into negotiations to bring about a political solution in Afghanistan.

The members of the "six plus two" group took note of the contacts established during this period by the Personal Representative with the Taliban and the United Front, as well as with non-belligerent Afghan groups. They welcomed the written agreement communicated by the two warring parties in letters to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to enter into a process of dialogue, without preconditions and through the intermediation of the Secretary-General or his Personal Representative, aimed at achieving a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. They in particular noted the commitment of the two sides to negotiate in good faith and not to unilaterally abandon the negotiating process until the negotiating agenda has been exhausted.

The "six plus two" members remained committed to a peaceful political settlement of the Afghan conflict, in accordance with relevant provisions of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. They urged the two parties to cooperate closely with the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in moving the process forward in its shortest possible time and expressed renewed commitment to continue to work closely with and in support of the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative to assist in establishing a meaningful agenda that will address the issues at the core of the Afghan conflict. They expressed grave concern about the recent offensives in Afghanistan and the negative humanitarian consequences, and reiterated that there is no military solution. They encouraged other efforts, particularly those of the Afghan people, in support of United Nations activities to achieve a peaceful settlement in Afghanistan.

The signatories to the Tashkent Declaration on Fundamental Principles for a Peaceful Settlement of the Conflict in Afghanistan (A/54/174-S/1999/812, annex) reaffirmed the principles contained in that Declaration and reiterated that its realization would contribute significantly to the promotion of peace in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan expressed its dissenting position.

The "six plus two" group requested the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to report to the group by 1 February 2001 on the progress achieved in the process of dialogue agreed by the two warring sides.